

NOTICE OF SOME INDIAN TORTOISES (INCLUDING THE DESCRIPTION OF A NEW SPECIES PRESENTED TO THE BRITISH MUSEUM BY PROFESSOR OLDHAM). BY DR. J. E. GRAY, F.R.S., ETC.

The most interesting specimen of the very curious series of Indian Tortoises presented to the British Museum by Professor Oldham, is a fine full-grown example of a species which so strongly resembles the South American *Testudo tabulata*, in size, form and colours, that it might easily be mistaken for a specimen of that species which had been taken to India in some vessel. But on a closer examination it is easily distinguished from the American kind by the following particulars:—

First. It belongs to the Old World division of the genus, or the true genus *Testudo*, characterized by the last vertebral plate being only as wide as the caudal and the hinder half of each of the hinder marginal plates, instead of being of the width of the caudal and the hinder marginal plates, as is the case with the American "*Gophers*," including the species *Testudo tabulata* and *Testudo gopher*.

Secondly. It has a large, elongated, well-marked nuchal plate, which is never found in *Testudo tabulata*.

Thirdly. The hinder notch is more angular and acute.

The specimen sent from India has the deeply concave sternum, which is supposed to mark the male animals, as is the case with many specimens of *T. tabulata*. It is sent under the name of '*Testudo elongata*,' which I willingly adopt; as it may have been noticed under that name in some Indian periodical which has not yet come under my observation.

# 1. TESTUDO ELONGATA.

Thorax oblong, rather depressed, truncated in front, rounded behind, black; shield yellow-edged. Sternum rather narrow, truncated in front, angularly notched behind, yellow, largely black-varied. Nuchal plate elongate. The hinder vertebral plate as wide as the caudal and the hinder half of the hinder marginal plates.

*Hab.* India, "Mergui."

*Note.*—Since the above was written, I have received a Part of the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for 1856, and I find the following observations on this species, which appears to have been mentioned in a preceding volume:—

*Testudo elongata*, Blyth, Journ. As. Soc. Bengal, xxxii. 639. Vol. xxv. 1856, lxxxiii. 712.

Mr. Blyth states, "A number of living specimens have been received from Captain Berdmore.

"Colour of naked parts olive-grey varied with dull yellow."

Mergui, Tenasserim River.

2. *TESTUDO HORSFIELDI*, Gray, Cat. Tort. B.M. t. 1.

There is a fine large specimen of this species, showing that it is very distinct from the *T. græca* of Europe. The upper jaw has a small notch on each side of the tip.

3. *EMYS CRASSICOLLIS*, Bell.

The Collection contains three adult specimens of this species, which are marked "*Emys nigra*, Blyth."

The adult examples are rather broader than the younger specimens, in which a mucro is usually found, and the dorsal keels are almost entirely obliterated; the hinder edge of the thorax is acutely dentate; the sternum is pale greyish, with black areolæ and rays. It is probably the absence of the keels in the adult state that induced Mr. Blyth to regard it as a distinct species; but the keels generally become more indistinct in all the species which are keeled in their younger condition.

The specimens are marked as coming from "Mergui." The jaws are even, and not notched in front.

4. *EMYS NIGRA*, n.s., Blyth, Journ. As. Soc. Bengal, lxxviii. 712.

Mr. Blyth observes on the affinity of this species with *E. crassicollis*, but he does not appear to have the means of comparison.

The Collection contains two species of the genus *Batagur* :—

5. *BATAGUR BASKA*, Gray, Cat. Tort. B.M. t. 16.

There is a very large adult shell of this species, which is marked "*Emys tentoria*, Blyth." It measures  $21\frac{1}{2}$  inches over the back;  $19\frac{1}{2}$  along the sternum, and is 18 inches across the back and  $21\frac{1}{2}$  over the convexity of the back. The jaws of the species are very strongly dentated; the upper one is toothed on the edge with two angular series of pits; the lower jaw is furnished with two concentric series of acute spinose tubercles, those in the outer series the largest and very acute, the central one in front horny, very large.

6. *BATAGUR OCELLATA*, Gray, Cat. Tort. B.M. t. 36.

There is a beautiful specimen of a species of this genus from Mergui, which I am inclined to believe is referable to *Emys ocellata* of Dumeril and Bibron (Erpétologie générale, ii. 329. t. 15. f. 1); a species which I have not before seen in any English collection. I should have no doubt of its being that kind from the description; but in the figures the dark spots on the costal plates are represented as being nearly regular, circular, broad rings round a pale circular centre, while in the specimen received from Professor Oldham the dark mark on the costal plate is an irregular oblong or square mark only, partly surrounding the paler centre of the shield.

Mr. Blyth in the same paper observes, "*Emys ocellata* would appear to be the commonest species in the Burmese rivers, and its naked parts are olive-grey, the crown blackish, with a yellowish-white V-like mark over the snout, continued as a supercilium over each

eye and back upon the neck, another straight line behind the eye, and both are often more or less broken into spots.

“Carapax dusky mottled with yellowish, a great black spot surrounded with a pale *areola* upon each discoidal (!) plate, dorsal ridges blackish with pale border, and lower parts wholly yellowish-white.

“Some are brighter coloured than others, and the ocelli become proportionally smaller as they increase in size.

“The carapax of our largest specimen measured 9 by  $6\frac{1}{4}$  inches, but it probably is not nearly full-grown.”

*Hab.* Burmah.

#### 7. CISTUDO DENTATA, Gray.

There is a fine adult specimen of this species in the Collection, also from Mergui.

### BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH.

December 11, 1856.—Professor Balfour, Vice-President, in the Chair.

The following papers were read:—

1. “Description of a Method of Preserving Plants of their Natural Form and Colour,” by Thomas R. Marshall, Esq.

The plant should be placed in a box, in such a manner as to preserve the natural disposition of its parts; fine sawdust (perfectly dry) of box, or other hard wood, is then to be carefully sprinkled over it, taking care not to shift the position of the leaves. The plants ought to be quite fresh when put into the box. About a fortnight in the dust is sufficient to dry the plants in summer (in a natural heat); succulent plants require a longer time.

2. “On the species of Pine called in Moffat ‘Dr. Walker’s Pouch Fir,’ ” by Professor Fleming.

3. “On some new species of Marine Diatomaceæ from the Firth of Clyde,” by Professor Gregory.

4. “Notice of Hepaticæ, found near Aberfeldy,” by John Lowe, Esq.

The author enumerated fifty-five species.

The third meeting of the session was held on January 8, 1857.—Professor Balfour, Vice-President, in the Chair.

The following papers were read:—

1. “On the production of Ergot on Rye,” by Kenneth Corbet, Esq.

The author stated that he found that native ergot was more certain in its medical action than that imported from the Continent.

2. “On a Monstrosity in the Fruit of *Silene inflata*, with some remarks on Placentation,” by A. Dickson, Esq.

Mr. Dickson exhibited a specimen with partitions in the ovary. He considered that the specimen he produced went to support the view of central placentation in all cases, as suggested by Schleiden.